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ABSTRACT

A new system for assessing student ratings of instruction has been implemented at the University of Washington. Two major changes are in evidence. First, there is an explicit recognition that student ratings can and do serve multiple functions, and the same evaluative questions are not necessarily appropriate for each. Secondly, there is an explicit recognition that adequate diagnostic information cannot be efficiently provided instructors with use of a common set of evaluative questions for all classes. Student Rating Forms A through E are appended. (Author/BJG)

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Instructional Evaluation
Educational, Psychological, and Survey Research
Test Administration, Construction, Scoring, and Analysis

Educational Assessment Center

University of Washington

November 1974

A Brief Description of the Student Ratings Forms of the University of Washington Instructional Assessment System

G. M. Gillmore

A new system for assessing student ratings of instruction has been implemented at the University of Washington. Two major changes are in evidence. First, there is an explicit recognition that student ratings can and do serve multiple functions, and the same evaluative questions are not necessarily appropriate for each. Secondly, there is an explicit recognition that adequate diagnostic information cannot be efficiently provided instructors with use of a common set of evaluative questions for all classes.

Educational Assessment Center Project: 276

A Brief Description of the Student Ratings Forms of the University of Washington Instructional Assessment System

G. M. Gillmore

Introduction

A new system for assessing student ratings of instruction has been implemented Fall Quarter, 1974, at the University of Washington. The basic data collection device is optically scannable sheets, as in the past; however, two major changes are in evidence. First, there is an explicit recognition that student ratings can and do serve multiple functions, and the same evaluative questions are not necessarily appropriate for each. Secondly, there is an explicit recognition that adequate diagnostic information cannot be efficiently provided instructors with use of a common set of evaluative questions for all classes.

Multiple functions. If we ignore research, an institution of higher learning consists basically of individuals within three groups, administrators, instructors, and students. Each of these groups can make use of student ratings of instruction for its own purposes. Administrators need largely comparative information for rank, pay and tenure decisions, as well as to make decisions about course offerings and teaching assignments. Instructors need information to improve their courses and instructional methods. Students need information to help them choose courses effectively. These three functions could be termed normative, diagnostic, and informative, respectively.

The content of items for each of these functions needs to be somewhat different. For the normative function, items should be very global in nature, implying no basic philosophy of instruction, and allowing little or no possibility of being invalid for a specific class. Otherwise, comparisons among a variety of classes will not be reasonable. For the diagnostic function, items need to relate to what is actually happening within a class, and the results of polling students should potentially have direct implications for improving the course or instruction, or at least in the identification of areas for which one may need

to collect more specific diagnostic information. Finally, informative items should be directed toward those specific aspects of a course or instructor which provide useful information to students when choosing specific courses or programs.

Multiple forms. In almost any instructional setting with more than one instructor, and more than one course, a variety of instructional goals and techniques are readily visible. At a college or university, this is undeniably the case. One set of evaluative questions for diagnostic purposes cannot at once satisfy all types; e.g., a large lecture format and a small seminar format. Several solutions to this problem are available. The extreme solution is to have each instructor choose his own items. This has several shortcomings. First, instructors need to make a serious time commitment to the item selection process. Many are unwilling to allocate their time in this way. Secondly, many instructors lack the expertise to be effective item writers or even choosers. Thirdly, when administering a large program, distinct items for each class present some serious logistic problems. Finally, comparison information is either impossible or extremely expensive to provide. Thus, that solution was rejected at our current level of technology.

Another solution, more common, is for each discipline to have its own form. The potentially large number of distinct disciplines makes this solution unattractive but, more important, the great variety of instructional goals and techniques found within most departments makes this approach hardly a solution at all. The problem of appropriate items seems less a discipline-oriented problem and more an instructional technique problem.

Our approach was to isolate broad course types which cut across discipline lines. An extensive analysis of actual courses yielded five such types, although future analysis may reveal others, and assuredly some classes may not fit well into any category.

The Forms

In our work in developing new instruments for assessing student attitudes toward instruction, we tried to design forms which would make

differentiations among the three functions in terms of 1) directions given students, 2) the content of the items, and 3) what is done with the results. Furthermore, we tried to satisfy the diagnostic function more completely by creating separate forms, each tailored to a broad course type.

Succeeding general instructions and demographic information, the forms contain basically five sections, three primarily for diagnostic feedback for the instructor, one primarily for administrative evaluation, and one primarily for student information. Each section is preceded by brief but distinct directions to students indicating the purpose of the items. The five forms are found in Appendix A. I shall discuss each section in turn.

General items. The items contained in section 1 are designed for the normative function. Notice that the section is brief, having four items, and each item is very global in nature. The purpose of these items is to gain a very general assessment of students' attitudes toward the course as a whole, the content of the course, and two important components of instruction. These items appear on all forms. Their global nature gives confidence that none are invalid for any class. Also, their inclusion allows comparisons to be made university-wide, college-wide, department-wide, etc. They also allow other comparisons which may have some importance for program evaluation, e.g., one department versus another.

We have chosen the following six response categories for use for these and all other items: Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair, Poor, Very Poor. These categories were chosen rather than the more common Likert categories, Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree (at the expense of greater difficulty in writing coherent items), for two reasons. First, actual responses to these categories, and class means, are more readily interpretable. It is easier to understand that on the average you are "good" than you are "agree." Secondly, student ratings have a tendency to bunch up at the favorable end. There is evidence that use of both an Excellent and a Very Good category at the favorable end yield more between class variance, i.e., discrimination, than a four or five point Likert scale.

Diagnostic items. Diagnostic-type items tailored for five basic course types are found in section 2 of each form. These items are meant to help instructors discover weaknesses in their courses and teaching. However, at this level, items are still common within course types, thus allowing normative comparisons with other similar courses. Specific items were determined both by content analyses of courses and by interviews with more than one hundred randomly chosen instructors.

Form A was designed primarily for small lecture-discussion type courses. Items primarily emphasize the clarity and quality of information transmitted, but items dealing with interaction between instructor and student are included as well.

Form F was designed primarily for large lecture-type classes, where little or no in-class interaction between instructor and student is practiced. Thus, items strongly emphasize course organization and information transmitted.

Form C was designed for seminar discussion-type classes which include a minimal amount of formal lecturing by the instructor. The items emphasize quality of discussion as well as course organization and interest level.

The items for Form D are tailored to those classes whose purpose is the teaching of problem-solving or heuristic methods. Clear explanations, dealing with student difficulties and quality of problems are emphasized.

There are classes in a number of disciplines which are skill oriented and in which students get "hands on" experiences related to future occupational demands, e.g., nursing clinical, art studio, social-work field experience, etc. Form P is designed for these classes, with items dealing with the special considerations of this type of course.

Student items. Items to provide student information are found in section 3 of each form. By "piggy-backing" this section onto the form, information for students can be provided rather cheaply. (We still adopt the position that each instructor must approve, in advance, of having these items published for him or her.) Furthermore, it allows selection of items which speak to student concerns. These items are also common to all forms, thus implicitly implying that student concerns do not differ significantly over courses.

INSTRUCTIONAL ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

INSTRUCTOR

COURSE SECTION

DIRECTIONS

WHEN REGISTERING, WAS THIS A COURSE YOU WANTED TO HAVE

IS THIS COURSE:	IN YOUR MAJOR	IN YOUR MINOR OR PROGRAM REQUIREMENT	A GENERAL REQUIREMENT	AN ELECTIVE	AUDIT
YOUR CLASS:	FRESHMAN	SOPHOMORE	JUNIOR	SENIOR	GRADUATE
GRADE YOU EXPECT TO RECEIVE:	A	B	C	D	

IMPORTANT: IN RATING THIS COURSE REFERRING TO EACH ITEM CAREFULLY AND THOUGHTFULLY. SHOW LITTLE DIFFERENCE IN RESPONSES TO SOME ITEMS INCLUDING YOUR INSTRUCTOR TO OTHERS. KEEP THE PURPOSE OF EACH SECTION IN MIND AS YOU RATE THE COURSE.

SECTION 1
TO PROVIDE A GENERAL EVALUATION

1. THE COURSE AS A WHOLE WAS
2. THE COURSE CONTENT WAS
3. THE INSTRUCTOR'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE COURSE WAS
4. THE INSTRUCTOR'S EFFECTIVENESS IN TEACHING THE SUBJECT MATTER WAS

SECTION 2
TO PROVIDE DIAGNOSTIC FEEDBACK TO THE INSTRUCTOR

5. COURSE ORGANIZATION WAS
6. CLARITY OF INSTRUCTOR'S VOICE WAS
7. EXPLANATIONS BY INSTRUCTOR WERE
8. INSTRUCTOR'S ABILITY TO PRESENT ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS WHEN NEEDED WAS
9. INSTRUCTOR'S USE OF EXAMPLES AND ILLUSTRATIONS WAS
10. QUALITY OF QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS RAISED BY INSTRUCTOR WAS
11. STUDENT CONFIDENCE IN INSTRUCTOR'S KNOWLEDGE WAS
12. INSTRUCTOR'S ENTHUSIASM WAS
13. ENCOURAGEMENT GIVEN STUDENTS TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES WAS
14. ANSWERS TO STUDENT QUESTIONS WERE
15. AVAILABILITY OF EXTRA HELP WHEN NEEDED WAS

SECTION 3
TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ABOUT THE COURSE TO OTHER STUDENTS

16. USE OF CLASS TIME WAS
17. INSTRUCTOR'S INTEREST IN WHETHER STUDENTS LEARNED WAS
18. AMOUNT YOU LEARNED IN THE COURSE WAS
19. RELEVANCE AND USEFULNESS OF COURSE CONTENT IS
20. EVALUATIVE AND GRADING TECHNIQUES (TESTS, PAPERS, PROJECTS, ETC.) WERE
21. REASONABLENESS OF ASSIGNED WORK WAS
22. CLARITY OF STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES AND REQUIREMENTS WAS

SECTION 4
OPTIONAL ITEMS. USE ONLY AS DIRECTED.

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INSTRUCTIONAL ASSESSMENT SYSTEM 12

INSTRUCTOR _____

COURSE _____ SECTION _____

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DIRECTIONS: YOU MAY RETURN THIS QUESTIONNAIRE COMPLETELY OR PARTIALLY UNANSWERED WITHOUT PENALTY. USE A NO. 2 PENCIL AND MAKE MARKS FIRM BUT NOT SHINY. DO NOT CROSS OUT GRIDS. DO NOT MAKE STRAY MARKS. ERASE CLEANLY IF YOU CHANGE AN ANSWER.

WHEN REGISTERING, WAS THIS A COURSE YOU WANTED TO TAKE?	YES	NO	NEUTRAL			
IS THIS COURSE:	IN YOUR MAJOR	IN YOUR MINOR OR PROGRAM REQUIREMENT	A DISTRIBUTION REQUIREMENT	AN ELECTIVE	OTHER	
YOUR CLASS:	FRESHMAN	SOPHOMORE	JUNIOR	SENIOR	GRADUATE	OTHER
GRADE YOU EXPECT TO RECEIVE:	A	B	C	D	E	PASS

STUDENT RATING FORM

B

IMPORTANT: IN RATING THIS COURSE, RESPOND TO EACH ITEM CAREFULLY AND THOUGHTFULLY. AVOID LETTING YOUR RESPONSES TO SOME ITEMS INFLUENCE YOUR RESPONSES TO OTHERS. KEEP THE PURPOSE OF EACH SECTION IN MIND AS YOU RATE THE COURSE.

E—EXCELLENT
VG—VERY GOOD
G—GOOD
F—FAIR
P—POOR
VP—VERY POOR

SECTION 1:
TO PROVIDE A GENERAL EVALUATION.

1. THE COURSE AS A WHOLE WAS: 1.
2. THE COURSE CONTENT WAS: 2.
3. THE INSTRUCTOR'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE COURSE WAS: 3.
4. THE INSTRUCTOR'S EFFECTIVENESS IN TEACHING THE SUBJECT MATTER WAS: 4.

SECTION 2:
TO PROVIDE DIAGNOSTIC FEEDBACK TO THE INSTRUCTOR.

5. COURSE ORGANIZATION WAS: 5.
6. SEQUENTIAL PRESENTATION OF CONCEPTS WAS: 6.
7. EXPLANATIONS BY INSTRUCTOR WERE: 7.
8. INSTRUCTOR'S ABILITY TO PRESENT ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS WHEN NEEDED WAS: 8.
9. INSTRUCTOR'S USE OF EXAMPLES AND ILLUSTRATIONS WAS: 9
10. INSTRUCTOR'S ENHANCEMENT OF STUDENT INTEREST IN THE MATERIAL WAS: 10.
11. STUDENT CONFIDENCE IN INSTRUCTOR'S KNOWLEDGE WAS: 11.
12. INSTRUCTOR'S ENTHUSIASM WAS: 12.
13. CLARITY OF COURSE OBJECTIVES WAS: 13.
14. INTEREST LEVEL OF CLASS SESSIONS WAS: 14.
15. AVAILABILITY OF EXTRA HELP WHEN NEEDED WAS: 15.

SECTION 3:
TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ABOUT THE COURSE TO OTHER STUDENTS.

16. USE OF CLASS TIME WAS: 16.
17. INSTRUCTOR'S INTEREST IN WHETHER STUDENTS LEARNED WAS: 17.
18. AMOUNT YOU LEARNED IN THE COURSE WAS: 18.
19. RELEVANCE AND USEFULNESS OF COURSE CONTENT IS: 19.
20. EVALUATIVE AND GRADING TECHNIQUES (TESTS, PAPERS, PROJECTS, ETC.) WERE: 20.
21. REASONABLENESS OF ASSIGNED WORK WAS: 21.
22. CLARITY OF STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES AND REQUIREMENTS WAS: 22.

SECTION 4:
OPTIONAL ITEMS—USE ONLY AS DIRECTED.

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INSTRUCTOR _____

COURSE _____ SECTION _____

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WHEN REGISTERING, WAS THIS A COURSE YOU WANTED TO TAKE?	YES	NO	NEUTRAL			STUDENT RATING FORM
IS THIS COURSE:	IN YOUR MAJOR	IN YOUR MINOR OR PROGRAM REQUIREMENT	A DISTRIBUTION REQUIREMENT	AN ELECTIVE	OTHER	C
YOUR CLASS:	FRESHMAN	SOPHOMORE	JUNIOR	SENIOR	GRADUATE	OTHER
GRADE YOU EXPECT TO RECEIVE:	A	B	C	D	E	PASS

IMPORTANT: IN RATING THIS COURSE, RESPOND TO EACH ITEM CAREFULLY AND THOUGHTFULLY. AVOID LETTING YOUR RESPONSES TO SOME ITEMS INFLUENCE YOUR RESPONSES TO OTHERS. KEEP THE PURPOSE OF EACH SECTION IN MIND AS YOU RATE THE COURSE.

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SECTION 1:
TO PROVIDE A GENERAL EVALUATION.

1. THE COURSE AS A WHOLE WAS:
2. THE COURSE CONTENT WAS:
3. THE INSTRUCTOR'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE COURSE WAS:
4. THE INSTRUCTOR'S EFFECTIVENESS IN TEACHING THE SUBJECT MATTER WAS:

SECTION 2:
TO PROVIDE DIAGNOSTIC FEEDBACK TO THE INSTRUCTOR.

5. COURSE ORGANIZATION WAS:
6. INSTRUCTOR'S PREPARATION FOR CLASS WAS:
7. INSTRUCTOR AS A DISCUSSION LEADER WAS:
8. INSTRUCTOR'S CONTRIBUTION TO DISCUSSIONS WAS:
9. CONDUCIVENESS OF CLASS ATMOSPHERE TO STUDENT LEARNING WAS:
10. QUALITY OF QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS RAISED WAS:
11. STUDENT CONFIDENCE IN INSTRUCTOR'S KNOWLEDGE WAS:
12. INSTRUCTOR'S ENTHUSIASM WAS:
13. ENCOURAGEMENT GIVEN STUDENTS TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES WAS:
14. INSTRUCTOR'S OPENNESS TO STUDENT VIEWS WAS:
15. INTEREST LEVEL OF CLASS SESSIONS WAS:

SECTION 3:
TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ABOUT THE COURSE TO OTHER STUDENTS.

16. USE OF CLASS TIME WAS:
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19. RELEVANCE AND USEFULNESS OF COURSE CONTENT IS:
20. EVALUATIVE AND GRADING TECHNIQUES (TESTS, PAPERS, PROJECTS, ETC.) WERE:
21. REASONABLENESS OF ASSIGNED WORK WAS:
22. CLARITY OF STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES AND REQUIREMENTS WAS:

SECTION 4:
OPTIONAL ITEMS—USE ONLY AS DIRECTED.

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INSTRUCTIONAL ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

INSTRUCTOR _____

COURSE _____ SECTION _____

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WHEN REGISTERING, WAS THIS A COURSE YOU WANTED TO TAKE?		YES	NO	NEUTRAL		STUDENT RATING FORM
IS THIS COURSE:	IN YOUR MAJOR	IN YOUR MINOR OR PROGRAM REQUIREMENT	A DISTRIBUTION REQUIREMENT	AN ELECTIVE	OTHER	D
YOUR CLASS:	FRESHMAN	SOPHOMORE	JUNIOR	SENIOR	GRADUATE	OTHER
GRADE YOU EXPECT TO RECEIVE:	A	B	C	D	E	PASS

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SECTION 2:
TO PROVIDE DIAGNOSTIC FEEDBACK TO THE INSTRUCTOR.

5. COURSE ORGANIZATION WAS:
6. SEQUENTIAL PRESENTATION OF CONCEPTS WAS:
7. EXPLANATIONS BY INSTRUCTOR WERE:
8. INSTRUCTOR'S ABILITY TO PRESENT ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS WHEN NEEDED WAS:
9. INSTRUCTOR'S USE OF EXAMPLES AND ILLUSTRATIONS WAS:
10. QUALITY OF QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS RAISED BY INSTRUCTOR WAS:
11. CONTRIBUTION OF ASSIGNMENTS TO UNDERSTANDING COURSE CONTENT WAS:
12. INSTRUCTOR'S ENTHUSIASM WAS:
13. INSTRUCTOR'S ABILITY TO DEAL WITH STUDENT DIFFICULTIES WAS:
14. ANSWERS TO STUDENT QUESTIONS WERE:
15. AVAILABILITY OF EXTRA HELP WHEN NEEDED WAS:

SECTION 3:
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INSTRUCTOR _____

COURSE _____ SECTION _____

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WHEN REGISTERING, WAS THIS A COURSE YOU WANTED TO TAKE?	YES	NO	NEUTRAL			STUDENT RATING FORM
IS THIS COURSE:	IN YOUR MAJOR	IN YOUR MINOR OR PROGRAM REQUIREMENT	A DISTRIBUTION REQUIREMENT	AN ELECTIVE	OTHER	E
YOUR CLASS:	FRESHMAN	SOPHOMORE	JUNIOR	SENIOR	GRADUATE	OTHER
GRADE YOU EXPECT TO RECEIVE:	A	B	C	D	E	PASS

IMPORTANT: IN RATING THIS COURSE, RESPOND TO EACH ITEM CAREFULLY AND THOUGHTFULLY. AVOID LETTING YOUR RESPONSES TO SOME ITEMS INFLUENCE YOUR RESPONSES TO OTHERS. KEEP THE PURPOSE OF EACH SECTION IN MIND AS YOU RATE THE COURSE.

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1. THE COURSE AS A WHOLE WAS:
2. THE COURSE CONTENT WAS:
3. THE INSTRUCTOR'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE COURSE WAS:
4. THE INSTRUCTOR'S EFFECTIVENESS IN TEACHING THE SUBJECT MATTER WAS:

SECTION 2:
TO PROVIDE DIAGNOSTIC FEEDBACK TO THE INSTRUCTOR.

5. OPPORTUNITY FOR PRACTICING WHAT WAS LEARNED WAS:
6. SEQUENTIAL DEVELOPMENT OF SKILLS WAS:
7. EXPLANATIONS OF UNDERLYING RATIONALES FOR NEW TECHNIQUES OR SKILLS WERE:
8. DEMONSTRATIONS OF EXPECTED SKILLS WERE:
9. INSTRUCTOR'S CONFIDENCE IN STUDENTS' ABILITY WAS:
10. RECOGNITION OF STUDENT PROGRESS BY INSTRUCTOR WAS:
11. STUDENT CONFIDENCE IN INSTRUCTOR'S KNOWLEDGE WAS:
12. FREEDOM ALLOWED STUDENTS TO DEVELOP OWN SKILLS AND IDEAS WAS:
13. INSTRUCTOR'S ABILITY TO DEAL WITH STUDENT DIFFICULTIES WAS:
14. TAILORING OF INSTRUCTION TO VARYING STUDENT SKILL LEVELS WAS:
15. AVAILABILITY OF EXTRA HELP WHEN NEEDED WAS:

SECTION 3:
TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ABOUT THE COURSE TO OTHER STUDENTS.

16. USE OF CLASS TIME WAS:
17. INSTRUCTOR'S INTEREST IN WHETHER STUDENTS LEARNED WAS:
18. AMOUNT YOU LEARNED IN THE COURSE WAS:
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20. EVALUATIVE AND GRADING TECHNIQUES (TESTS, PAPERS, PROJECTS, ETC.) WERE:
21. REASONABLENESS OF ASSIGNED WORK WAS:
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